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SUBJECT: BURUNDI'S CNDD-FDD PARTY SEEKS USG HELP IN
POLITICAL STALEMATE

Classified By: Classified By: Ambassador Patricia Moller for reasons 1.
4b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary: On July 26, the President of Burundi, ruling National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party, Jeremie Ngendakumana, appealed to Ambassador Moller for assistance in resolving the government's impasse with Burundi's major political opposition parties, Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) and Unity for National Progress (UPRONA). He wanted particularly to know the real reasons, for FRODEBU's reluctance to cooperate with the current government of Burundi (GOB), and to ascertain why UPRONA feels it deserves more representation -- at the highest levels of government -- than Burundi's constitution allows. Ngendakumana accused FRODEBU of actively seeking an alliance with the PALIPEHUTU-FNL, and chided UPRONA for insisting upon additional positions at the highest levels of Burundi's government with little regard for the political structure set forth by Burundi's constitution.

¶2. (C) Responding to Ngendakumana, the Ambassador expressed support for a solution agreed-to by all parties, and said she would convey the same message to UPRONA and FRODEBU. Laying the onus to maintain a dialogue squarely on the government, Ambassador Moller stressed the need for negotiation, warning that, if no solution could be found, consequent political instability would eventually negate the great progress made by Burundi over the last two years, and jeopardize donor and other international cooperation. Importantly, a failure by Burundi's President Nkurunziza and his ruling CNDD-FDD party to resolve this political impasse would virtually demolish their ability to govern effectively and give impetus to the eddying whispers of possible impeachment proceedings. She said it would be a tragic failure (for Burundi) to lose the ability to govern itself and urged all the political principals, notably CNDD-FDD, to act out of patriotism and regard for the future of Burundi and its people, rather than to seek personal and political gain. End Summary.

Historical Context

¶3. (C) Burundi's election of 2005 resulted in a decisive win for the CNDD-FDD party and its leaders, Burundi's new President Pierre Nkurunziza and party head, Hussein Radjabu. The ruling government quickly came under fire from FRODEBU

and UPRONA. Both loudly claimed that CNDD-FDD was exploiting its clear majority by ignoring the dictates of the Burundi constitution in doling out key ministerial positions, handing them to CNDD-FDD members rather than proportionally to members of other parties, in accordance with election results.

Despite repeated calls to adhere to the law, CNDD-FDD party leaders Nkurunziza and Radjabu appeared to manage the executive branch of the government according to their own wishes. Following the removal of Radjabu as president of CNDD-FDD at the congress of Ngozi on February 7, a major schism has developed within the ruling party, exacerbated by Radjabu,s claim that he would form a new party as a CNDD-FDD off-shoot. This perceived new weakness within the CNDD-FDD has emboldened opposition parties, in particular FRODEBU, to challenge CNDD-FDD,s stranglehold on Burundi,s political process and to work actively to destroy, or at the very least, to discredit Nkurunziza,s government.

¶4. (C) In the wake of President Nkurunziza,s most recent cabinet appointments that again fail to accommodate the demands of the minority parties, there have been renewed calls for action to restore the political legitimacy of the government including, albeit tacitly, whispers of possible impeachment proceedings against the President. Although a successful impeachment of the Nkurunziza is unlikely (See Comment a.), the very fact of its consideration in Burundi,s parliament would effectively moot the President,s ability to manage the proceedings of the executive branch of the government. In the worst case, if the President were successfully impeached, his successor (See Comment b.) would be ineffectual domestically and Burundi would be considered outside its borders as politically unstable. The real tragedy of an impeachment attempt, successful or not, would be that the government would be

hamstrung in its ability to progress toward the economic and social development so desperately needed by Burundi,s people.

(Comment: a. An impeachment of the president can only be successful with a 2/3 majority in total of both Burundi,s National Assembly and Senate. b. In the event of a successful impeachment of President Nkurunziza, another member of his CNDD-FDD party must be elected by the Burundi parliament. End Comment.)

Meeting with the Ambassador

¶5. (C) At his request, CNDD-FDD ruling party president Jeremie Ngendakumana, former Burundian Ambassador to Kenya, met privately with Ambassador Moller on July 26. Ngendakumana expressed his concern over the constitutional validity of Burundi President Pierre Nkurunziza,s newly named cabinet and the potential for increased political strife its composition would cause. In particular, Ngendakumana criticized the two major political opposition parties, FRODEBU and UPRONA, for their reluctance to actively participate in the creation of an acceptable coalition government according to the results of the 2005 elections. He explained that, on several occasions, President Nkurunziza had afforded both opposition parties the opportunity to nominate candidates for each of the government,s ministerial positions but had received no response. Without input from the opposition, and interpreting their silence as unwillingness to join his government, President Nkurunziza named a new cabinet, which continues to be dominated by his own party. Ambassador Ngendakumana cited what he claimed were the roadblocks erected by FRODEBU and UPRONA to the successful formation of a coalition government.

FRODEBU - A Disruptive Force?

16. (C) Ngendakumana claimed that FRODEBU is actively working to discredit Nkurunziza,s government, and actively seeking an alliance with the PALIPEHUTU-FNL to advance its political aims during Burundi,s next round of elections in 2010. The CNDD-FDD party head claims that FRODEBU is scared, that the recent success of Burundi,s Partner Roundtable and its potential to dramatically improve the lives of ordinary Burundians will only serve to strengthen President Nkurunziza and his ruling party. Ngendakumana further maintained that FRODEBU will be a disruptive force to any of the economic and social improvement projects generated through donor cooperation.

17. (C) Ngendakumana accused FRODEBU of engineering the recent exodus of the PALIPEHUTU-FNL. Additionally, according to Ngendakumana, FRODEBU believes that CNDD-FDD,s success in the 2005 elections can be attributed, in part, to the existence of a military wing of the party. So, he surmised, FRODEBU,s recent association with the militaristic PALIPEHUTU-FNL is the beginning of an alliance that FRODEBU believes will help ensure its political success in 2010. Despite his assertions regarding the PALIPEHUTU-FNL role in the degradation of Nkurunziza,s government, Ngendakumana believes that the rebel PALIPEHUTU-FNL will soon be back at the negotiating table.

UPRONA - Demanding a Right or an Advantage?

18. (C) According to Ambassador Ngendakumana, the UPRONA party is persistently demanding greater representation at the highest levels of Nkurunziza,s government, despite having already garnered a disproportionate number (15) of high political positions (See Comment a.), including Burundi,s First Vice President, Dr. Martin Nduwimana. (See Comment b.)

Ngendakumana pointed to the historical dominance of UPRONA -- in power from 1966 - 1994 and from 1996 - 2003 -- as their

impetus for demanding a greater presence in the current government. Ngendakumana claims to have asked UPRONA leaders if their requests for additional government positions were being made to realize a constitutional right or simply as a way to gain political advantage, promising no CNDD-FDD support

for the latter motive. (Comment: a. Ngendakumana,s tally of UPRONA,s positions of power within the current government may be inflated since he tallies as "ministerial equivalents" such non-traditional posts as advisors to the First Vice President.

b. Complicating these issues further, some within UPRONA maintain that First Vice President Nduwimana is no longer a member of the party, since he earlier refused to resign his post in solidarity with UPRONA,s stand against Nkurunziza,s government. End Comment.)

19. (C) As recently as July 19, Jeremie Ngendakumana claims to have met with UPRONA President Aloys Rubuka to head off what UPRONA considered a brewing political crisis; however the meeting wrought only further attempts by UPRONA to gain additional political footholds. At that meeting Ngendakumana agreed in writing to support UPRONA,s bid for an open Senate seat in return for UPRONA,s support of CNDD-FDD in the 2010 elections. UPRONA then promised to deliver UPRONA,s list of nominees for ministerial positions to President Nkurunziza within the next few hours, but the list was never forthcoming.

And in conclusion....

¶10. (C) While speaking in general terms regarding the malaise Ngendakumana considers to be plaguing the current government, he expressed his belief that it is only a small group of people who are consistently at the heart of continued disruptions. To manage public perceptions of the ongoing crisis, and noting President Nkurunziza,s personal popularity, Ambassador Moller suggested that it may be prudent for Nkurunziza to use the media to communicate to the Burundian people directly his desire and his determination to resolve the ongoing political tussle. Ngendakumana is also convinced that talking with opposition leaders, he is not speaking to the real "decision makers" but rather to interlocutors for former Burundian Presidents Domitien Ndayizeye and Pierre Buyoya.

Comment:

¶11. (C) Unsurprisingly, the picture Ngendakumana painted of CNDD-FDD was of a reasoned, judicious, and above all constitutionally sensitive political party doing its best to negotiate with intransigent self-seeking spoilers who seek nothing more than the perquisites of power. Although doubtless many of his assertions and his historical context for the present conflict are true, he appears to have forgotten it was CNDD-FDD,s arrogance following the 2005 election that led initially to bad feelings between his and the other parties, and that now they see greater advantage in rebuffing CNDD-FDD,s recent energetic approaches. He seemed a bit disappointed that the Ambassador failed wholeheartedly to endorse his disingenuous portrait, but rather that she advocated strongly for CNDD-FDD to continue vigorously its pursuit of a negotiated agreement adopting, if necessary, a more conciliatory posture in order to end the conflict and sidestep a stalemate in Burundi,s ability to govern itself and for the welfare of the country and its people. End Comment.
MOLLER